



SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
Washington, DC 20423

Office of Environmental Analysis

September 22, 2010

Mr. Mark Baumler
Montana State Historic Preservation Officer
1410 8th Avenue
P.O. Box 201202
Helena, MT 59620-1202

**Re: Finance Docket No. AB 6 (Sub-No. 445X); BNSF Railway Company
Abandonment near Great Falls, in Cascade County, Mont.
(SHPO Project #: 2006051510)**

Dear Mr. Baumler:

The Surface Transportation Board's (Board) Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) has determined that the Board's approval of the proposed railroad abandonment in the above referenced proceeding would have no effect on historic properties pursuant to 36 C.F.R. 800.3(d)(1) of the Section 106 regulations implementing the National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 470f.

We have made a determination of **No Historic Properties Affected** for this undertaking based on all available information to date, including the findings of cultural resources survey that was completed for this project in March 2007 as part of our documentation efforts pursuant to 36 C.F.R. 800.11. The results of the survey are included in the report, *A Cultural Resources Inventory of a Portion of the Lewistown to Great Falls Branch Line* (2007) prepared by Ethos Consultants Inc. The report was prepared on behalf of the applicant (BNSF Railway Company), and the Board in order to determine if the proposed undertaking could have the potential to affect any National Register of Historic Places (National Register) eligible or listed historic properties located within the project right-of-way (also the Area of Potential Effect, APE). We understand that a copy of the cultural resources report had been sent to you by the applicant in April 2007.

The cultural resources survey indicated that the Cascade County portion of the rail line proposed for abandonment had been previously recorded as Site 24CA264 and determined potentially eligible for listing on the National Register under Criterion A, B, C and D. However, the survey indicated that the portion of the rail line located within the project area has been subject to a number of actions that have severely compromised the site's integrity of association and setting including: the previous salvage of rail, the removal of a railroad bridge, the installation of a sewer main, the dumping of trash, and the expansion of residential properties

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into the right-of-way. Combined, these actions have negatively altered the integrity of the portion of the site within the APE. Therefore, we have concluded that the segment of the Site 24CA264 within the project area is a non-contributing portion of the National Register eligible property and thereby find that the undertaking would have no effect on historic properties.

We are notifying all consulting parties for this project regarding our **No Historic Properties Affected** finding, and are making the documentation used to support this finding available to the public on our website. Please provide us with your objections to our finding, if any, within 30 days of receiving this letter.

If you have any question, please contact Dave Navecky of my staff at 202-245-0294.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victoria Rutson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Victoria" and last name "Rutson" clearly distinguishable.

Victoria Rutson
Director
Office of Environmental Analysis

cc: John Sims, BNSF Railway Company
Ellen Sievert, City of Great Falls